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T O T

S E R M O N

P R E A C H ' D

At the Assizes held at *Stafford*,

July 26, 1716.

Before the Right Honourable
Sir *THOMAS BURY*, Knt
Lord Chief-Baron of the Ex-
chequer.

A N D
Sir *ROBERT EYRE*, Knt
One of the Judges of the KING'S
BENCH.

By *Thomas Southall*, M. A. Vicar of *Harborne*
in the County of *Stafford*.

Publish'd at the Request of the High-Sheriff, and
the Gentlemen of the Grand-Inquest.

Birmingham: Printed and Sold by *Matthew Owen*,
Bookseller near *St. Martins*; by *T. Varnam*, and
J. Osborne in *Lombard-street*, and *A. Bettsworth*
in *Pater-noster-row*, Booksellers in *London*.

(Price Four Pence.)

T O T H E

Right W O R S H I P F U L

THOMAS BIRCH, Esq; High Sheriff of the County of *Stafford*.

And to the Gentlemen of the Grand-Inquest,

Sir *Bryan Broughton*, Bart. Foreman.

Sir *Henry Gough*, Knt.
Paul Foley, Esq;
Oswald Mosely, Esq;
Francis Eld, Esq;
Samael Careless, Esq;
James Wood, Esq;
Thomas Jukes, Esq;

Henry Arden, Esq;
George Ley, Esq;
Walter Chetwind, Esq;
William Baddily, Gent.
Richard Wilkes, Gent.
Richard Drakeford, Gent.

Gentlemen,



H E Indispensible Obligation, which you were pleas'd to lay upon me to publish this SERMON, has embolden'd me to present it to the World, under Your Patronage and Protection; that if there be any

The DEDICATION.

any offensive and displeasing Truths,
the World may know who are answer-
able for the Publication of them.

Its greatest Ornament are the Names
of so many worthy Gentlemen, con-
spicuous and remarkable for their Zeal
and Affection, their resolute and unsha-
ken Firmness, their inviolable Adherence
to our Excellent Constitution. Who
are not afraid to stand up in the De-
fence of their King and Country ; but
take all Occasions to express their Loy-
alty, in spite of all those little Arti-
fices, which are so generally practis'd
to Insult and Affront them.

Gentlemen,

As this your Conduct redounds to
your own Honour, so I hope your
Example will Influence and Engage
others ; since there is no way to pre-
serve

The DEDICATION.

serve our happy Establishment; but to be as bold and vigorous in Defending it, as some are in their Endeavours to Undermine and Subvert it.

That GOD wou'd be pleas'd to Preserve his most Excellent MAJESTY, whom He has set over us; together with his Royal and Illustrious House, for the Defence and Security of this Church and Nation; and that He would Establish Love and Unity, Peace and Concord amongst us, is the hearty Prayer of,

Gentlemen,

*Your most Obliged, most Humble
and Obedient Servant,*

THOMAS SOUTHALL



A SERMON

PREACH'D

At the Assizes held at *Stafford*,

ECCLESIAS. 7. 10.

Say not thou what is the cause that the former Days were better than these; for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.



AMONG the various Subjects of Discourse, which are become the Entertainment and Business of the Age, none is more common, but withal none more wicked and pernicious than the Times. The Times are a Topick that every one takes the liberty to talk of as he pleases, and none are so Ignorant and Illiterate as not to think themselves

selves qualified to Discourse upon this Subject. Hence it comes to pass that the Providence of God in the Government of the World, and the Reigns of Princes over their Subjects, are equally traduced by every vulgar Tongue; and the weightiest Affairs both in Church and State are exposed to the censure of the Senseless, Impertinent and busy Multitude.

How true this Observation is, our own Circumstances plainly declare. For what is now a Days the common Subject of Discourse? Is it not about the Course and Order of the World, the Disposal of Crowns, and the Fate of Kingdoms? Is not the Supream Administration, the Publick management of Affairs brought to the Bar of every private Judgment? Don't the meanest of the People set up for publick Reformers, turn Quacks and Empericks in Government and Polity, and prescribe Remedies for their own imaginary Distempers of the State? What justifying and applauding of past Transactions? What reproaching, libelling and condemning of the Present? So that if our own Senses did not witness the contrary, one wou'd imagine by the noise and number of our Complainers, that the World was never so much disordered, nor the Times so Corrupt and Degenerate as now.

Now it's the Design of our wise Author in the Text, to silence all such unreasonable Clamours, to remove those Complaints which are made against the course and order of the World, and to put a stop to those bitter Invectives which disaffected Persons have always raised against the Happiness of the Times. He charges the Conduct of such Persons with downright Folly, and notwithstanding the specious Pretences which they commonly make, not only to Reason, but Religion itself, to justify their Actions; yet our inspired Author

condemns

condemns this Practice as sinful and Foolish. For, says he, *Say not thou what is the cause that the former Days were better than these, for thou dost not enquire wisely concerning this.* By the former Days I suppose is meant the former State and Condition of the World; so that the full Import of the Words amounts to thus much.

Think not, nor imagine that the State of the World was better formerly than it is now, and upon such a conceit be not troubled, nor uneasy at the present Order and Disposition of Affairs; but on the contrary, be so content with the Dispensations of Providence, as not to disturb either your selves or others by any needless Enquiries into the Government of the World.

My Design then is to silence the Complaints which unreasonable Men are apt to make against the Course and Order of the World; and to shew, that the present Disposition of Affairs is as favourable and propitious, as it ever was in the Days of our Predecessors. In order to which, I shall

First, Enquire into the former State and Condition of the World, and by considering what it was in former Times, shall endeavour to shew, that it was not better then, than it is now.

Secondly, I shall shew, that all Complaints about the Course and Order of the World, argue great irreverence towards God, and occasion no less Mischiefs and Inconveniences to Men.

Thirdly, I shall consider by way of Application how far we are concern'd in these Particulars, and what Conduct becomes us under the present Circumstances of Affairs.

First then, I shall enquire into the former State and Condition of the World. Now the World may be considered either in its Natural or moral State. By the

Natu-

Natural World, I understand the Works and Operations of Nature. By the Moral, the Lives and Conversations of Men. Now if you enquire into these two States, and consider either how Nature has acted, or how Men have lived from the beginning of the World, and compare them with the present Time, I question not but you'll perceive sufficient Reason to acquiesce and be content with the present State of Things.

First then, as to the State of the Natural World. Whoever enquires how Nature has acted from the beginning of the World, will find she has kept a constant and steady Course in all her Actions, and that she seldom or never has transgress'd those Laws which God has appointed her. So that at this distance of Time she acts by the same Rules, and Works by the same Methods, that she did at the first Formation of the World. In the Heavens above, we see the Sun performs his annual and wonted Course, making the successive Returns of Day and Night, Summer and Winter. And as the Sun presides over the Day to give Light upon the Earth, so the Moon and the Stars govern the Night, and each moves within his respective Orb, with an immutable, unerring, and ever constant Pace. So that what was said of the Laws of the *Medes and Persians*, may be said of their Movements *They alter not.*

And as the Heavens above observe a regular and constant Course, so Nature works according to her usual and stated Measures in the Earth beneath. Whether we consider the Vegetative or Sensitive, the Animate or Inanimate part of this inferior World, one may see that all things, according to the Nature of each particular Species, have all along observed the same Method in their Production by the same Means

attain'd

attain'd to Perfection, and by the same Causes and Accidents are subjected to a Dissolution. So that what King Solomon long since observed, we experimentally find to be true, that *nothing is new under the Sun*.

Some indeed there are who imagine, that the Face of this Earth which we now Inhabit, was once much more Beauteous and Perfect, than it is now ; and that it's present State is no more to be compared with what it was formerly, than a ruinous House is to one newly and commodiously Built. Such they say was it's State before the Deluge. They tell you Nature was then fresh and fair, in her full Beauty and Perfection ; that there was no Change of Seasons, but one constant Spring ; no Extremities of Heat and Cold, but the Heavens were always Temperate, and the Earth luxuriously Prolifick. The Poets in their Writings describe this State under the Character of the Golden Age. And a modern Author of great Parts and Ingenuity has taken a great deal of Pains to prove the first Earth as happy as Paradise ; and to this he imputes the Longevity of Mankind before the Deluge. But if we consult the History of *Moses*, the most ancient of Historians, as well as the most Authentick, we shall learn from him a different account of this Matter. He mentions a Paradise, but he makes it consist of a certain portion of Earth, which he calls the Garden of *Eden*, and describes it's Scituation, where he says, *Adam* was placed in his State of Innocence. But he is so far from asserting a Paradisiacal Earth, that he describes it, either almost or altogether such as we find it now. For he tells us, that immediatly upon the Fall of *Adam*, the Earth was cursed, and that *in sorrow he should eat of it all the days of his life. That it should bring forth thorns and Thistles, and that in the sweat of his Face he should eat his*

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Bread.

Bread. As this Account seems wholly different from a Paradisiacal State, and is a Description of the Earth, as it was at the beginnig of the World; so it agrees exactly with its State and Condition now. Besides, if the whole Earth had been a Paradise, I don't see how the Expulsion of *Adam* out of the Garden of *Eden*, wou'd have been any Punishment of his Disobediencie. So that from the account of *Moses*, and the reason of the Thing, it is more than probable, that this natural and external World was much the same at that Time, as now.

As to the Lives of the Primitive Fathers, how they came to last so many hundred Years, is hard to resolve. Some think those Years not solar Years, such as we make our Computations by; being perswaded that such Houses of Clay, as our Bodies are, cou'd never last eight or nine hundred Years, when those we Build of the hardest Stone, will scarce endure half so long. Others more curious have imputed it, some to the Simplicity and Sobriety of their Diet; some to an unknown Virtue in their Herbs and Plants; others to the natural Strength and Vigour of their Constitutions: Again, others to the Clemency and Serenity of the Heavens. How far one or more or all of these Causes conspired to lengthen the Lives of these Primitive Mortals to such a prodigious Extent, is uncertain; and indeed what their Years were, is likewise uncertain. So that in the main, all is but Conjecture, nor has any certain Knowledge in this Matter hitherto been Attain'd. The surest way is to resolve it into the Will and Pleasure of our great Creator, as the necessary Means to the more speedy Peopling of the World. Therefore not to pursue this Consideration any further, I shall pass from the Natural to the Moral World.

For

at the Assizes held at Stafford. II

For the more distinct Understanding of which, we will consider it under these three different Periods. *First*, We will consider the Moral World, before the Giving of the Law. *2dly*, As it was under the Law. *3dly*, As it is under the Gospel.

First then, let us see what sort of Life Men led before the Giving of the Law. In this State of the World, Men had no Rule to walk by, but the Light of Reason. The Religion of those Times was only Natural. Divine Revelation was not then known in the World, but Men Worship'd God according to those Natural Notions they had of the Deity, and to certain traditionary Rules which were deliver'd over from Father to Son, and so descended from one Age to another. So that the Light they had was but as a dim Lamp in comparison of that Broad-day which now Shines in the World. You'll say then, the want of Divine Revelation and other Helps to Knowledge must in some Measure excuse the Wickedness of those Days, and extenuate the Demerit of their Offences. St. Paul therefore speaking of those Times says, *The Times of that Ignorance God winked at.* That is, not so far as absolutely to excuse them, but to make some Allowance for their Failings. And it was well for them, that he did so. For to what a height of Wickedness was the World arriv'd in a very little Time? For as soon as God had finish'd the Creation, Sin entred into the World, and began to multiply as fast by the Malice of the Devil, as Mankind did by the Benediction of God. Inasmuch as *Moses* represents God "repenting at the Heart that
"ever he made Man. For God saw that the wicked-
"ness of Man was great, and that every Imagination
"of the thoughts of his Heart was evil continually.
And again, "God looked upon the Earth, and behold

“ it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted his way
 “ upon the Earth. The World at that time was so
 abominably Wicked, that excepting four Persons, *Abel*,
Seth, *Enos* and *Enoch*, we read not of one good Man
 from *Adam* to *Noah*, which contains the space of sixteen
 hundred years and upwards. In *Noah's* time there was
 not one good Man in the World but himself; he only
 was righteous, and all Mankind in general besides him,
 were grown insufferably Wicked. Thus ye see what
 the State of the moral World was before the Giving of
 the Law,

Let us in the next place enquire what it was, when
 the Law was Given, after the Earth was replanted,
 and it pleased God to select a peculiar People to himself.
 The World having now receiv'd a new Accession of
 Light, and obtain'd a further degree of Knowledge,
 became thereby considerably mended, and Vice had not
 such an universal Approbation as before. Virtue found
 some few Advocates, there were a few that durst be
 Good in that wicked and ungodly World. But the
 number of good Men was still so small, that there was
 almost an infinite Disproportion between the good and
 bad. For not to take notice of the Gentile World,
 which was as vicious as before, being given up to abo-
 minable Idolatry, and all manner of Sensuality. How
 intolerably wicked were the very Jews themselves?
 Notwithstanding they were honour'd with the Word
 of God, tho' they had the Divine Presence constantly
 residing with them, and tho' Miracles and Wonders
 were conversant amongst them. The Psalmist there-
 fore cries out, *Help me, Lord, for there is not one godly*
Man left, the faithful are minished from among the Chil-
dren of Men. And again, *All the Earth is full of Dark-*
ness and cruel Habitations. This is the Character, and
 such

such the Description which the Holy Psalmist gives of the World in his Days.

Let us now in the last Place descend to consider it since *Life and Immortality are brought to Light by the Gospel*. The World is now in its last State, and therefore ought to be in its greatest Perfection. Indeed these are the best Times in one respect the World ever saw. Never was there such an Institution as the Christian, never so many Encouragements to Virtue before. Truth is now in its Meridian Splendour, now there is a Light shining, which *enlightens every Man that cometh into the World*. And O! that Men would walk by this Light, which wou'd *guide their Feet into the way of Peace*. Some I trust there are who do it, and I pray God add to their Number. I have the Charity to believe, nay I hope with confidence I may speak it, that there are and have been more good Men under the Christian Oeconomy, than were under either of the above-mention'd Periods. Christianity has had that happy Influence upon a great many Men, to make them renounce their Vices, and practice those things that are Commendable and Virtuous. I speak not this to complement the present Times, to perswade Men that they are Virtuous, when they are not. That be far from me. I remember the Prophets Malediction, *Wo be to them that call evil good, and good evil*. There are, and always have been, too too many Vices. Sin and Iniquity has always had the upper-hand, as well since the Publishing of the Gospel as before. The Majority has all along been on the side of Vice. Christianity was no sooner Planted, but it was Persecuted, nay before it was Planted, even as soon as it was Preach'd. And when the fire of Persecution ceas'd, and it began to thrive and flourish under the auspicious Influence of the first Christian Emperor

peror *Constantine* the Great: How was it like to be overwhelmed by the damnable Heresy of *Arius*? And when that Danger was over, it had almost perish'd a second time, by the breaking in of Popery and Mahometism. And how is it still Persecuted and Reproached by the scandalous and wicked Livers of its Professors? We Christians, even the very best amongst us, walk unworthy of our holy Vocation; and much the greater Number of us are an utter Shame and Reproach to it in our Morals. Therefore what I have said of the Christian Morals, is not spoke with Design to flatter Christians, as if there were none that are bad amongst them. But to shew that they are as good, nay, I hope better than they were in any preceding State or Period of the World.

Having thus far consider'd the former World, both in its natural and moral Capacity, and shewn, that in neither of these Senses it was better than the Present.

2. I proceed now to the next Particular, which is, to shew, that all Complaints against the Course and Order of the World, argue great irreverence towards God, and occasion no less Mischiefs and Inconveniences to Men.

All Complaints necessarily suppose some fault in the Thing or Person complain'd of; so that to complain of the Governance of the World, is in effect to say, that the Providence of God is very faulty in the Government and Disposal of worldly Events. 'Tis as much as to say, that God is either Regardless or Imprudent in the Government of the World; and that things might be better manag'd than they are. What an insolent Impiety it this, and what a daring Piece of Arrogance and Presumption? This is to wrest the Sceptre out of the Hands of God, and by an unparallel'd Act

of

of Sacrilege, to rob him of the most material Branch of Majesty, the supream Direction of all Affairs.

Now, tho' the Care and Providence of God be of equal Extent to the Creation, and nothing is too small and inconsiderable for his Cognizance and Direction; yet we may reasonably suppose, he proportions his Care to the Worth and Value of his Creatures; and that he is chiefly concerned about those things which relate to the Good and Happiness of Mankind. We may therefore conclude that Societies and Communities of Men are the principal Objects of his Care and Governance; and that nothing less than his extraordinary Providence effects the Revolutions of States and Kingdoms. For which reason, it must be the highest Affront we can put upon Him, to presume to reform by our little Models, what he has done by his own immediate Care and Wisdom. God has a special Hand in the regulating and establishing the communities of Men, and more particularly still in the designation and appointment of his own Viccgerents; because his own Honour, as well as his Peoples Happiness, does visibly depend upon it.

(True it is, God does not always make choice of a Wise and Religious Prince to sit on the Throne. Sometimes the *Ministers of God*, instead of promoting his Glory, or their Subjects Good, are Instruments of Mischief, and Encouragers of Evil-doers. But such Princes as these are to be esteem'd as Scourges in the Hands of God, to correct a sinful and rebellious People; and I cannot but think, as they are Instruments of Divine Justice, that they are chosen by him for that very Purpose. But then when they have executed the end of their Mission, and accomplish'd the Divine Will, these Fire brands themselves are thrown into the Fire. That is, God either removes them by Death, or finds out some

some other way, as his Wisdom sees most proper, to rescue his People from their Tyranny and Oppression. For as the end of Government is the good of Mankind, as *St. Paul* excellently observes, when he says, speaking of Kings, that *they are the Ministers of God to thee for good*. So I think that God is too good a Being, unless it be in Judgment to a sinful People, to suffer the Happiness of his Creatures to be ravish'd from them. A wicked Prince, who *Solomon* says, is "as a roaring Lion, and a ranging Bear", is no proper Emblem of a Merciful and Good God. And again, when he says, "By me Kings Reign, and Princes decree Justice, howe're this Text has been gloss'd and perverted, he means no more, but that Kings and Princes are appointed for the maintenance of Religion and Virtue. to execute Righteousness and Justice, and that Wisdom should direct them in these weighty Affairs. It wou'd require too much time to shew you how God has dealt with wicked Princes and Magistrates in the several Stages and Periods of the World. The Scriptures will tell you what he has done in the time of Old. And History will Inform you what he has done since. *Lactantius de mortibus Persecutorum* shews us, that there was not one of those Emperors, who persecuted the Primitive Church, that did not dye some Painful or Ignominious Death. And if History were consulted, it wou'd afford Instances enough of God's Displeasure against the Enemies of his Church and People. By which it appears, that tho' such Princes act by the Permission of God, yet they have not his Approbation. But pardon me that I insist so much upon wicked Princes, when we have so good a One of our own.

To proceed then. As all Complaints against the general Course and Order of the World are Sinful, be-
cause

cause they reflect upon the Providence of God ; so such as are made against some particular Parts of it, such as Kings and Government, are much more so, because these are more immediately under the Care and Guidance of Heaven, than others are. We must not therefore reflect upon the Conduct and Behaviour of our Superiours, such as are entrusted with the chief Management of State Affairs, and the Concerns of the Realm ; and especially, not upon the Person of the King. God has approximated Princes and Magistrates to himself ; he has made them in some Sense his Associates, and Co-partners of his Power and Authority. In the Scriptures we find they are called by the same Name, and said to be of their Lineage and Descent. *I said ye are Gods, and ye are all the Children of the most High* ; says David speaking of the Magistracy. And the more effectually to secure and maintain their Authority, God has given a particular Command, requiring us to Honour and Revere them. For as the first Command of the first Table of the Decalogue, enjoyns our Acknowledgment of one God ; so the first of the Second commands us to Honour his Deputies and Vice-gerents ; which implies, not only the King himself, tho' him Principally, but all those who are Invested in any Post of Honour and Authority under him. Now this Honour and Respect consists not only in a Forbearance of all opprobrious and reproachful Language, all unbecoming and disrespectful Actions, all unreasonable and groundless Complaints ; this is but the negative Part of that Duty which we owe them. It requires further, that we shou'd both think and speak well of them ; that we shou'd acquiesce in their Conduct and Government, observe their Commands, and finally, Pray,

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for

for their Persons. *St. Paul* therefore exhorts, "That
 " Supplications, Intercessions, and giving of Thanks,
 " be made for Kings, and for all that are in Au-
 " thority, that under them we may lead a quiet
 " and a peaceable Life in all Godliness and Honesty.
 You see here, the Apostle makes our dutiful Beha-
 viour to our Governours, necessary to our Peace and
 Quietness in this World; that under them we may
 lead a quiet and peaceable Life. Which brings me
 to consider, that all Complaints against the Course
 of the World, as managed by our Superiours, are
 the occasion of great Mischiefs and Inconveniences
 to Men. There is nothing so offensive to publick
 or private Peace, as a popular Discontent. By a
 popular Discontent, I mean, that of a very great,
 if not the major Part of the People. Now, this
 Discontent is for the most part occasion'd by Com-
 plaints and Invectives, both by Words and in Wri-
 tings, against the supream Governours of Publick
 Affairs; and seldom fails to produce very pernicio-
 us and terrible Effects. For hereby first of all the
 publick Peace is violated and broken. By the pu-
 blick Peace, I mean, both the Peace of the Church,
 and that of the State. Secondly, the private Peace
 is molested and disturb'd; by which I mean, either
 Peace between one Family and another, or between
 Persons of one and the same Family, or between
 Man and Man. And when Peace, which is the
 Pleasure and Beauty of Society, is thus torn asun-
 der, and broken Piece-meal. Nothing can hinder,
 but that Censoriousness and Uncharity, all sorts of
 Variances, Strifes, Envyings, Faction and Disorder,
 will be the Consequences of such a fatal Discord.
 Which brings me to consider in the third and last Place,
 by way of Application.

3. How

3. How *We* are concern'd in these Particulars, and what Conduct becomes *Us* under the present Circumstances of Affairs.

And alas! with concern I speak it, as some of us have too much indulg'd to Complaints of this Nature, so we too lamentably see the dismal Effects of them. We have already seen a desperate and wicked Rebellion rais'd in the Land, to dethrone his Majesty, extirpate his Royal Family, and subvert our excellent Constitution; and tho' it be happily blown over (by the Blessing of God) upon the Care of his Majesty, the Zeal and Wisdom of his Parliament and Ministry, and the hearty Endeavours of his faithful Subjects; yet the Seeds of it still remain: I mean the Murmurings and Complaints so frequent amongst Us. And what these Seeds may again grow to in time, unless prevented by special Care, is no hard Matter for any one to foretel. But I hope that same Providence, which has hitherto appear'd in our behalf, in defeating the wicked Enterprizes of our Enemies, will still preside over us for our Good, 'till it has settled Us upon a solid Foundation of Tranquility and Peace. But in the mean time, whoever looks upon that Rancour and Malice that now reigns amongst Us, will have but small hopes of ever seeing that Delightful Prospect the Psalmist speaks of, that of *Brethren dwelling together in Unity*. For our Differences are widened to that Degree, as not only to make Parties and Factions, to invade Cities and Corporations, but to infect Families, and disturb the nearest Relations amongst Men. How many Servants have on this Score been at Defiance with their Masters? Children with their Parents? Nay, Wives with their Husbands? Such

an unhappy Influence have our Present Differences, that they dissolve all Obligations, Sacred, Natural and Civil. Our Saviour foretold, *that Offences must come*; but withal he adds, *Wo be to that Man by whom the Offence cometh*. And I wou'd to God, that those Persons who give occasion to our present Distractions, wou'd seriously consider what a load of Guilt they Contract by raising and fomenting such unnatural Strifes and Contentions amongst Us. Who they are that cause these Disorders, is easy to resolve. For they are arriv'd to that degree of Confidence, as openly to Defend and Justify them to the World. Nay, they consecrate their Faction, Tumults and Rebellion, with the sacred Name of Zeal and Affection to the establish'd Church; and impudently Declare, that it is in Danger of being Subverted under his Majesty's Administration; tho' he has taken all possible Care to prevent, even the suspicion of such a Design, in that he has done nothing that looks that Way; but on the contrary, many things for *its Advantage and Security*; and particulary has given his Royal Word and Oath; *Things with Him, Sacred and Inviolable, to Protect and Defend it*. Were any Attempt made against our Civil or Religious Liberties, were the Course of Law or Justice in any Sense hinder'd or perverted; then there might be some pretence for Clamour and Complaint; but since we live under no sort of Oppression, nor are likely to do so; since we enjoy, not only a legal Succession, but withal a legal Administration; nothing is more unreasonable and unjustifiable, than the Behaviour of these Persons. They seem wholly to forget how Protestantism used to flourish under Popish Protection, and wou'd perswade the World, that the Church

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England cannot be safe, without having a Popish Prince to be its Head and Defender,

Out of the vast Numbers that espouse these Principles, and encourage these Disorders; it is with the utmost regret I observe, that the very Clergy are not wholly excepted. For is it not to be lamented, that any of that venerable and august Body, who are Embassadors of the God of Peace, Ministers of the Gospel of Peace, and who lye under infinite Obligations to promote Peace in the World! That any of these venerable Persons should look upon our publick Distractions, either with *Gallio's* Indifference and *Care for none of these things*, or encourage them by their Approbation. What a surprizing thing is it to see Faction and Rebellion, which are contrary to that Gospel they are commanded to Preach, and to the Doctrine of that Church in Particular, of which they are Ministers; to be either pass'd over in Silence, as a thing indifferent, or to be publicly Avowed and Abetted by them. But let the Authors of our Distractions remember, that the Blood which is shed in these unnatural Quarrels, will be required at their Hands. Well may the Church lye bleeding, when wounded, not by profest Enemies, but like *Agrippina* under the hands of *Nero*, Butcher'd and Slaughter'd by her own Sons. This is the first Age she ever produced a Son a Martyr for Rebellion, and I pray God he may be the last.

This Consideration gives us but small Hopes of seeing our Breaches wholly heal'd. And yet there is another which gives us less, which is the Universities, those publick Fountains of Learning and Education, where the Hopeful and Polite Youth of the Age repair for Principles and Manners; if these Fountains shou'd send forth the Waters of Strife and Debate, and seem

to forget in the best of Reigns, that Loyalty which they have profess'd in the worst, the prospect of Peace wou'd then be removed, not only from our own Eyes, but in humane Probability, from preceding Generations. As the first Consideration countenances and encourages our Disorders, so this tends to perpetuate and entail them on Posterity.

But we trust, that God, in his due Time, will convert the Hearts of the Obdurate, and open the Eyes of the Blind, that they may understand and *follow the things which belong to their Peace, before they be hid from their Eyes.* In the mean time our Peace and Security depends upon the Just and Impartial Execution of the Laws, which are as a Fence and Boundaries to the Peace of the Kingdom, to preserve it from these Sons of Violence, who else like a Deluge would break in upon it, and overwhelm it with Ruin and Confusion.

You my Lords then, who sit upon the Bench of Judicature. The Fate of these Kingdoms is in your Hands. His Majesty's Person and Government, the Peace and Establishment of these Realms, our Liberties and Properties are in effect at your Disposal. According as you administer Justice, in the Punishment of Evil-doers, and for the Praise of them that do well, so these things are like to stand or fall. But 'tis our Comfort, his Majesty's Comfort, a Comfort to the whole Realm, that your Lordships are Judges, not only of the Laws, but of Honour, Equity, Justice and Impartiality. That you have a Zeal and Affection for his Majesty, and the present Establishment; and that you wont suffer it to be over-turn'd by a Seditious, Rebellious, and Popish Faction.

In this auspicious Confidence we rest contented, and instead of repining, we bless God for the present Circumstances of Affairs. Our Condition might be better, provided we could live in Peace and Unity, in Love and Charity with one another; but we have great reason to praise God it is no worse. We might have been given up into Popish Hands, and Arbitrary Power; and instead of *sitting under our Vines and under our Fig-trees*, we might have been labouring in the Brick-kilnes, without Liberty, without Property. This wou'd certainly have been the effect of the late Rebelious Attempt, if it had prov'd Successful: And then what a high Feast would have been in *Gath*? What a Day of Jubilee in the *Romish Askelon*? Let Us then shew as much Joy for Our Deliverance, as they wou'd certainly have done for Our Destruction. And to prevent any such Danger for the future, let Us seriously resolve to reform Our Lives, and follow that which is Good. *Whence comes wars and fightings amongst you, come they not hence, even of your Lusts?* Our Sins are the cause of all our Troubles; therefore *we should cleanse our selves from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit*, and purge out the old leaven of Ambition and Envy, Malice and Revenge; and then we need not doubt, but that God, who has hitherto delivered this Church and Nation, will deliver them still. Nay, his former Deliverances will be but as so much earnest of future Blessings, till he has settled Us upon a Rock, an immutable basis of Peace and Prosperity. In a word, let Us endeavour to fear God, and serve Him, and then we need not doubt but the *Lord of Hosts will be with us*, and that *the God of Jacob will be our Refuge*. Now to God, &c.

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